

DHS Matters!

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Submit stories by e-mail to DHS-Newsletter@michigan.gov

Kalamazoo County girl helps children in foster care

From Rebecca Howard, Services Specialist
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Over the past year Natalie Criswell, age 9, has donated nearly 50 packages of new socks and underwear for children in foster care. Natalie heard about the needs of foster children from her mother, Patti Criswell, a therapist at Child and Family Psychological Services in Kalamazoo. When Natalie heard that many children come into foster care with only the clothes they are wearing she decided to do something to help.

Natalie raises money by selling snacks to the people where her mother works. When she has enough money saved she buys new socks and underwear and donates them to the Kalamazoo County Department of Human Services to share with children in foster care. Natalie recently won a \$50 gift certificate from Kohl's "Kids Who Care" program as an award for her project.

Natalie is also involved with the "Girls on the Run" program and was recently accepted by the Prep Strings Orchestra (Kalamazoo Junior Symphony) as a violinist. Young people like Natalie make a difference in the lives of children. She reminds us of what one person can do to make things better for children in foster care.



Rebecca Howard, Kalamazoo DHS foster home licensing worker, accepts a donation from Natalie Criswell.

Manistee-Benzie staff help client family after tragedy takes big toll

From Nancy Driy, Family Independence Manager
Benzie County DHS, Beulah
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Three Manistee-Benzie DHS staff members – eligibility specialist **Rose Madsen**, migrant worker **Nancy Sanchez** and migrant aide **Marta Delgado** – went above and beyond the call of duty when tragedy struck one of their migrant families on Aug. 10.

The family was in a serious car accident just north of Manistee that resulted in the death of the husband and father and the hospitalization of the mother and three children. By coincidence, the accident occurred in front of Rose Madsen's home. She responded by directing traffic until the authorities arrived.

Rose was aware that the family had a younger child who was not involved in the accident. She contacted the extended family to be sure that this child's needs were being met.

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Upcoming dates of interest

Aug. 24-Sep. 6	School starts!
September 5	Labor Day
September 11	Patriot Day
September 22	Autumn begins

Benzie-Manistee staff help family after tragedy

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Rose did not stop there. The family had no way to pay for transporting the deceased to his home state of Florida.

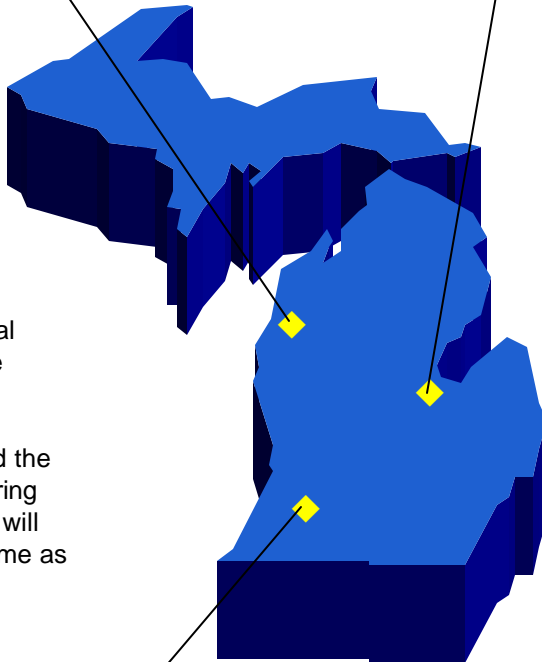
Rose and co-worker Nancy Sanchez began to contact local community agencies in order to collect donations to cover this expense. Marta Delgado joined them by taking up a collection at the Manistee County DHS and Michigan Works offices. These three employees managed to gather the amount needed to cover the entire expense.

Contributions were made by Telemon Corp., Salvation Army, NorthWest Michigan Human Services Agency, Father Fred Foundation, St. Phillip's Church, Smeltzer's Orchards, Jack Gray Farms, [Benzie-Manistee DHS](#) and [Grand Traverse-Leelanau DHS](#). In addition, Johnson Funeral Home of Manistee helped reduce the family's cost significantly.

Rose, Nancy and Marta exhibited the DHS values in a very real and caring way. Thanks to them, this family will have one less obstacle to overcome as they begin to put their life back together.

I am very proud to have Rose and Nancy on my staff and Marta as a coworker.

What's going on at DHS offices around Michigan?



Saginaw DHS & State Police conduct worker safety training

From Richard Latinen

Saginaw County DHS, Saginaw

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In response to ongoing concerns regarding worker safety issues during visits to client homes, Saginaw county officials organized and conducted a series of worker safety training presentations during July 2005. [Randy Barst](#), Director of the Saginaw County DHS, collaborated with Captain Daniel J. Miller of the Michigan State Police to present the training, which was held at the Saginaw County DHS office in Saginaw, Michigan.

Numerous public and private community organizations whose employees conduct home calls were offered the opportunity to participate in the training sessions. A total of 120 individuals were provided with practical knowledge regarding personal safety oriented strategies by Michigan State Police Trooper Jennifer Pintar.

Other local organizations participating in the training included the Saginaw County Community Mental Health Authority, the Saginaw County Department of Public Health, DHS Office of Inspector General, the Saginaw County Probate Court and the CAN Council of Saginaw County.

Barst said, "This was an excellent opportunity for both DHS and local partner staff to work together with professionals from the Michigan State Police to promote increased awareness of personal safety strategies and tactics for all our employees in Saginaw County."

Bone marrow drive nets funds for research

From Ruth Yoshikawa

Kalamazoo County FIA, Kalamazoo

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The Kalamazoo County DHS sponsored a Stem Cell-Bone Marrow Donor Drive during April in honor of cancer patients and stem cell transplant recipients, Derek Klobucher and Bob Hause, who are family members of two of our staff – recruitment specialist [Bess Klobucher](#) and foster care specialist [Lynn Hause](#).

Thirty-three people successfully became members of the Bone Marrow Donor Bank. Because there is a critical need for minority members of the bank, we are especially proud that ten of our donors were minorities.

Although there isn't a cost to the individual who becomes a donor, there is a cost to set up a drive of approximately \$65 per person. The Kalamazoo DHS Drive was funded by the former Jimmy Flynn Foundation that has donated its funds to the National Marrow Donor Program.

In order to allow non-donor staff to participate and to give something back, a Casual for a Cause Week and bake sale were held. Our generous staff contributed over \$1,000 to the National Bone Marrow Program. Due to the success and interest in this worthwhile endeavor, it is our intention to make this an annual event.

Suicide awareness in the work place

In observance of **National Suicide Prevention Week September 4-11**, the Employee Service Program is distributing information about suicide prevention to the state of Michigan workforce.

Seventy percent of suicidal individuals indicate their intentions in some way and the workplace may be the last place that they do so before acting. Death by suicide, attempts at – and even thoughts of suicide – are the desperate actions of a person who is feeling isolated, seriously depressed and is convinced there is no other solution to “fix” their life.

Often there are indirect signs such as talking about not being around much longer, asking someone to care for pets, taking all personal effects home from the office, or giving away possessions. There are times when the individual will openly admit to contemplating suicide, hoping that someone will take them seriously.

Telling your coworker that you are concerned will *not* cause them to take that step; instead it may save their life. If you are concerned about a coworker, remember the **Act** principle:

- **Acknowledge** your concern: take it seriously and be willing to listen.
- **Care** – take the initiative and voice your concern to your coworker or supervisor.
- **Then** help your coworker obtain **Treatment** immediately.

For more information and assistance on what to do if you are concerned about a coworker, visit the Employee Service Program's web page at www.michigan.gov/esp

Teenagers and suicide

Suicide is the third-leading cause of death for adolescents and young adults age 15-24. It is reported that approximately 11 young people ages 15-24 die every day by suicide. Most adolescent suicides occur after school hours in the teen's home. Any deliberate self-harming behaviors should be considered serious and further evaluated by a professional.

Adolescents are less likely to admit thoughts or attempts of suicide. Learn to recognize the signs of potential suicidal thoughts that may include talking or writing about suicide, death, or “of going away”; visible displays of guilt feelings or depression, withdrawal from family and friends; or engaging in self-destructive behaviors including alcohol and/or drug usage. Deaths by suicide can be prevented. Your expression of concern, support and love can make the difference.

Help is available for the individual, for the family, relatives and friends. Employee Service Program professional counselors are available for confidential assistance to state employees and their families, free of charge, and can be contacted at **517-373-7630** or **1-800-521-1377**.

For more information, visit the ESP web page at www.michigan.gov/esp. The National HopeLine Network is available 24 hours 7 days a week by calling **800-SUICIDE (800-784-2433)**, for TTY call **800-448-1833**. In the event of a life-threatening emergency you should go immediately to the nearest emergency room, or contact your local police at 911.

Date: July 26
To: Derek Hitchcock, Director
W.J. Maxey Boys Training Center, Whitmore Lake
Subj: Yusif Barakat

The purpose of this letter is to draw attention to the fine efforts of Yusif Barakat, the caseworker assigned to (a resident). A court ward since March 2001, (the resident) came under the court's jurisdiction in a serious juvenile delinquency case as well as a neglect and abuse proceeding. (The resident's) severe sexual-behavioral problems persisted as he was placed in a variety of programs and his progress remained frustratingly slow.

Your letters,
intercepted
and otherwise

However, since (the resident) has been working with Mr. Barakat at Maxey, his improvement has been nothing short of remarkable. At a review hearing last week, (the resident) was absolutely beaming with pride as he informed the court that he had graduated from high school. Before his placement at Maxey, such an accomplishment was hardly on the horizon and it might never have come to pass without the committed help of Mr. Barakat and the rest of your staff.

It is obvious that Mr. Barakat is truly invested in (the resident's) continued development and he has proven to be a wonderful asset for the court system and the community. Please extend my warmest thanks and commendations to Mr. Barakat and the rest of your staff for their excellent work.

Elizabeth Pezzetti, Family Court Judge

The Sixth Judicial Circuit, Family Division, Oakland County, Pontiac

■ *Yusif Barakat is a program manager at Maxey School's Woodland East Center. The resident's name was not published to maintain case confidentiality.*

Date: July 1
To: Phyllis Cooper, Family Independence Manager
Wayne County DHS Grand River-Warren District, Detroit
Subj: Bernice Darty

I am writing this letter with the intentions of thanking (Bernice) Darty. She helped lighten my load greatly and eased my mind concerning my mother. This young lady has been working with me since approximately March and I have come to really appreciate her service.

Mrs. Darty was always professional and courteous. I began to realize how professional she was as I went from institution to institution concerning my mother who recently passed. I received the kind of assistance that a taxpayer expects to receive from a government agency. Whoever hired her hired a servant of the people. Mrs. Darty is the epitome of a government worker.

I would like Mrs. Darty to be nominated for employee of the year. This is an opportunity for me to show Mrs. Darty the same support that she has shown me. She gave me the kind of assistance that would make you believe that she was earning a large commission. She really made me feel like this state hasn't totally gone down the drain.

Ralph Robert Jones Jr.

Romulus

■ *Bernice Darty is an eligibility specialist with the Grand River-Warren District office. She processed a burial for Mr. Jones' mother.*

Date: June 6
To: Mary Karen Martin, Eligibility Specialist
Mackinac County DHS, St. Ignace

Subj: Thanks

I just wanted to say thank you for all of your help throughout my time off due to surgery and now. I can't thank you enough. I would of been out on the street without your help.

Cindy Harlow

St. Ignace

■ *"Karen Martin is a very kind and caring person that went out of the way to try and help me," Harlow said. "I've never over the years had any employees go to that extent. She was even willing to help me move because I had no one to help! It's just amazing how she was willing to take time away from her busy schedule to help me."*

DHS Matters! is a product of Michigan's Department of Human Services
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